

## Are We Creating an Environment for Change?

(Go To Meeting)

Norbert Bohnert—May 13, 2022

With this troubled world that we live in, we can be thankful that we know what we do, and just continue to struggle in some ways, but at the same time have the courage to do our part in what we should be doing as God has called us for a special mission.

We're now about halfway through following the days of Unleavened Bread awaiting Pentecost. During Unleavened Bread we all observed that as we do yearly, along with the Passover, and closely examine ourselves especially during that time. To get rid of the sin in our lives and actually realize some of the sins that we have not realized before, and to work on making change.

Change results after we first recognize what we are trying to change. We take the time particularly during the days of Unleavened Bread to do this. But we all know that this should be a continuous thing in our lives. We should be getting rid of our sins on a daily basis; it should be a daily thing that we are assessing and not only confine it to this Holy Days season that we're in now.

Changing is the process, just like conversion, and it's part of conversion process and getting rid of sin. It's part of our lives, part of our calling and should not take us by surprise. It is something that we should be understanding to the fullest. It should not take us by surprise at all that we deal with this daily in our lives!

It's something that we should all understand. There are times that we, unfortunately, do not want to deal with change. Sometimes we try to run away from it, or we fight the change that we are actually trying to make in our lives. Sometimes it is encouraging and sometimes it is hopeful and energizing, but many, many times, unfortunately, change can be very painful and difficult for all of us.

Change actually is a function of our lives and is especially part of the calling to which we have been called.

Coming out of Unleavened Bread and Passover, we all look forward to Pentecost, which is around the corner. At this time more than ever, we should be realizing that change is something that should be on our mind quite a bit and not strictly dedicated to this time of year.

We know that we have a responsibility to change and come into alignment with our Father's character, so that we can reflect on this earth and be

a light to the world that desperately needs light. That is so, so much needed today!

I'm going to elaborate on this topic of change and everything will be framed on two important Scriptures.

2-Corinthians 5:16: "So then, from this time *forward* we know no man according to *the* flesh; but even if we have known Christ in *the* flesh, yet, now we no longer know *Him accordingly*. Therefore, if anyone *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (vs 16-17).

We understand that once we have been brought into a relationship with our Father and have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we are basically a new creation. Paul tells us that this new creation should be renewed. It needs to be re-energized day after day.

2-Corinthians 4:16: "For this reason, we do not lose heart; but if our outward man is being brought to decay, yet, the **inward man is being renewed day-by-day.**"

What does this mean? *The inner man/woman, what we were before baptism, should be replaced by something new, being renewed day-by-day!* A new man/woman, a new person that needs to be renewed and developed. We need to change into that new person. We are to become that new creation!

I would say that this even applies to those younger people who have not made the decision to be baptized. The Holy Spirit can still work, guide and direct their minds to begin to understand these things, as well.

Paul picks this thought in Eph. 4 from the perspective of change, and takes it just a little bit further. Paul encourages the Ephesians to focus on growing and maturity; to focus on the change that they need to go through. As Paul progresses to the latter verses of Eph. 4, he gets into specific examples and starts giving the brethren specifics about how to change and what that change actually means.

Throughout all of this, one of the things that Paul highlights is that, as we change and become more of that new creation, we begin to reflect our Father more perfectly. As we change spiritually, there are, of course, more actions that must change, as well. It's like a two-part change. There are

changes that go on in our mind and in our heart, but the change requires actions, we must act in our lives. That also brings upon the change.

It is not just an intellectual ascent to the Truth where we gain new knowledge and nothing else in our life changes. The actions that proceed from the changed heart are symbiotic. The actions and the spiritual change must go together if change is to be effective in the life of one who is called.

We will elaborate on this; Paul goes into the specifics to make really clear the type of things that need to happen in our lives.

Ephesians 4:28: “Let the one who stole, steal no more; rather, let him labor with *his* hands, working *at* what *is* good, so that he may impart *something* to the one who has need.”

A direct command! This is what Paul specifically instructed them at this point. A direct command, and it was a very simple command. A very physical thought process that he laid out.

If you steal, *stop!* Some action in your life must change! Stop! Fairly clear instruction that Paul give them. There must be an understanding, first of all, that stealing is wrong! It violates God’s Law and the principle of having any outgoing love or concern for others. Hence the command! If you are stealing, you have to do something’ you have to have an action. That, of course, is *stop! Stop stealing!*

Here it is important to think about the process that goes on, just the act of ceasing to steal does not affect the kind of change in our lives that we need to have to align with our Father’s character.

“...so that he may impart *something* to the one who has need” (v 28).

The short of it is that *as we grow in grace and knowledge*—which all of us are doing—*we must connect the actions to the spiritual motivation that we need!* To the *spiritual* understanding and knowledge. In effect, the power of the Holy Spirit—*when we submit to it*—will allow us to understand that clearly. It will help us to think. But there again, we have to apply ourselves. It will help us to act, and to see our world, our lives and families much differently.

Rather than stealing to support, just a analogy that Paul used when ‘stealing to get something that I want,’ what did Paul say? *Work, labor, engage in something that creates some value that is useful!*

We’re also instructed in the Scriptures that we should work six days a week. Again, instruction and change does not stop there. It’s a process. We

must continue assessing the actions that need to be done and take place in our lives. The process was emphasized with the days of Unleavened Bread that we just got past. “...so that he may impart *something to the one who has need*” (v 28).

This is where we come to crux of the point that Paul is actually making. To make a character change, call it behavioral changes in modern times, we need to get to the place where act on a much larger principle. The larger purpose of our Father and His values.

When we think about the act of actually stealing, that needs to be changed so that we move to a place where we have outgoing love, outgoing concern for those who are in need. The action we engage in is that we work so that we can fulfill their need. The motivation that is in us drives us to fulfill that need, because of outgoing love and concern for that individual. That’s what it should entail; spiritual motivation is tied directly to action. They must go hand-in-hand.

From one perspective, if we were a thief and at some point we stopped stealing, as an analogy, we might feel that there was some justification that we were aligned with God the Father. We are told distinctly in the Ten Commandments, ‘Thou shalt not steal.’ The real point is to really take on the character of our Father, the requirement for change, for real lasting change that aligns with God the Father’s character, requires us to engage in doing something different, with the motivation comes only from Spirit of God.

When those two things come together, then we can become the reflection of His character and nature. It takes both to accomplish that!

We said before that keeping the Law, the way of life is not simply stopping doing certain things. When we take on His nature and character, it’s the outgoing action that we have to show that we have to engage in that are motivated by God’s Holy Spirit that begins to change us:

- who we are
- what we are

As we push forward, after the days of Unleavened Bread leading to Pentecost, we seek to transform our lives into a reflection of our Father, it is important to focus on both the actions and the spiritual motivation that is part of the process of change.

Change requires both! As we come to the Day of Pentecost, we understand that the Holy Spirit is absolutely critical to this process of change.

Without the Holy Spirit, we have no understanding of the concept of what it means to build on that relationship and develop that character of God.

Without the Holy Spirit we do not even understand what it means to be like Him, or how to think about being like Him. When we receive the Holy Spirit, it allows our mind to be opened and it provides understanding and true perspective. It allows us to view ourselves in a way that we can begin to evaluate what needs to be changed in our lives and to become aligned with Him.

This is something that John recorded very well for us. The Holy Spirit provides the understanding and this knowledge. It leads us to understanding.

John 16:13: “ However, when that one has come, *even* the Spirit of the Truth, it will lead you into all Truth, because it shall not speak from itself, but whatever it shall hear, it shall speak. And it shall disclose to you the things to come. That one shall glorify Me, because it shall disclose to you *the things that* it receives from Me. Everything that the Father has is Mine; for this reason, I said that it shall receive from Me and shall disclose *these things* to you” (vs 13-15).

It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can connect to the mind of God the Father and Jesus Christ, and understand what it means to be like Them.

The change that needs to take place will open that up to us. It’s through the power of the Holy Spirit that our lives can be transformed into a reflection of our Father. Now we can understand that ***Christ lives His life in us through the power of the Holy Spirit!***

Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ, yet, I live. *Indeed*, it is no longer I; but Christ lives in me. For *the life* that I am now living in the flesh, I live by faith—that *very faith* of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

We also understand from Zech. 4 that when God was talking to His people about how He will build His Temple, and that it was not going to be by power or might, but it was going to be by His Spirit.

Zechariah 4:6: “Then he answered and spoke to me, saying, ‘This *is* the Word of the LORD to Zerubbabel, saying, ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.’”

Paul helps clarify that because he says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are being made into the image of our Father. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can

come into the alignment with His character. There’s no other way. This is a very crucial point to remember. The Holy Spirit will *never, never force* anyone to change or to act.

It will never require us to choose between good and evil. It will prompt us, encourage us, but it will never force us to choose. Something that God has always given us, the choice is to be ours. The action that we take must be ours.

Obviously, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to make this kind of change in our lives. ***But the Holy Spirit will never, never force us to change!***

That is something we must do willingly and to a tremendous degree gladly engage with. It must be our choice. The Holy Spirit will prompt us to make that choice, but it is our choice.

This whole thought process reflects to what we read in Ephesians where Paul was saying, ‘*If you are stealing, stop!*’ Allow the Holy Spirit to lead us. Understand the Truth and go, and work so you can have something to show us outgoing love and concern for the others, who are in need. Simple principle: display the nature of God in outgoing concern for others.

As you engage in that process, you will begin the change, and of course, you begin to reflect His character.

As we think more about this, the actions that we take in our lives day in and day out are inextricably linked to the spiritual mind that we are trying to develop. As Paul is telling us, we are a new creation and that creation needs to be fed, nourished and grow daily. It’s not dormant and stagnant. What we do with our actions is inextricably linked with the spiritual motivation in the spiritual man/woman that is growing within us. It would be foolish for us to think that we can go engage in any activity we want and that would not have an impact on the new creation that is being developed in us. It just won’t happen!

They are linked together. We do not get to choose just whatever actions we want to go and take and expect the creation is going to continue to grow and develop. That is why we look into the Law. That is why we read and engage in the Scriptures and understand God’s way of life.

That is the reason we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit so that it will reveal the kind of actions that we need to take to continue to support and to encourage the nourishment of the inner man.

What Paul outlines is the process. It doesn’t

happen overnight; it's a continuous process that leads to our conversion. This process is outlined in other places in the Bible, but as we engage in the process of change, what begins to happen is that because of the actions that we take on a regular basis, the environment that we live in begins to fundamentally change. It is not just our actions that change, it's the environment that we live in that begins to change as well.

Think about the process; consider this for a moment: As we start the process of developing our Father's character, we start with an understanding and knowledge of the Holy Spirit, which allows us to understand the Scriptures and understand the actions that we need to change and empower that change. As we begin to make those changes, we take actions in our lives. Change does not happen by itself. We need to act to change!

- as those actions build up over time, as we consistently show outgoing concern and love for others
- as we keep the Sabbath days—a special place where we can continuously connect and engage with our Father
- as we do the myriad of other actions that are based out of love, commitment and a desire to be like our Father and develop the mind of Christ

### ***Our environment will change!***

It changes for us and it affects and changes it for our families. It changes the community we live in. it's a process that starts and keeps going, because as we take the actions to change:

- we go back to the Law
- we look at the Law
- we understand the Law

Then we come back around and make other changes and come more into alignment with God the Father.

Over time, these actions that we take makes us grow and grow and grow. With that growth, slowly our environment, in which we live, the environment of our mind and thought process changes. It begins to change and reflect more of our Father's nature. When I speak of environment, I'm becoming an environmentalist. What do I mean by that term *environment*?

This is an extremely important point to understand. Environment is described as ***a circumstance, the object or condition by which one is surrounded!*** It is what surrounds us daily! It is the conditions, the thought processes that go on, the approach that we see around us.

The second definition by Webster's Dictionary states that the environment can be viewed as the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community.

Many times we don't even realize that there are surroundings that we live in affect what we do and how we do it. There are conditions that come from actions: social or other types of conditions that are built up because of the actions that people take.

So, in this context for us environment is first to the circumstances. The objects or conditions and those conditions can include social or cultural that we are surrounded by. Here is the key, which influences our behavior, whether we realize that or not: The environment that we live around and that we are around constantly does have an effect on our behavior.

In other words, the things we engage with: the media, the Internet, the people we interact with daily. The priorities we have or the purposes that we pursue, or the routines that we have in our lives. That is the environment that we create. All of these things come together to create that environment in which we and our families sometimes live; the environment where our communities live. All of those are created by the actions of the people who are in that particular environment.

As we think about change, from that perspective it brings us to an especially key point and that is one that we will look at and consider in the rest of this message.

What kind of environment are we building for ourselves, for our families—including Church families—within the communities that we live? Our communities many times are fractured, as we all know. Families from time to time are fractured. They are fractured because:

- of actions
- of thought processes that drive those actions
- of purposes
- of principles
- of priorities

What kind of environment are we building? *We must ask that of ourselves!* Quite frankly, the environment that we are building should reflect the nature of God the Father and Jesus Christ. That is the goal that we should be all striving for.

Let us consider the Garden of Eden, going back. When you look through the Scriptures and consider where the Garden of Eden is discussed and revealed, it is always and consistently used in the context of where the Father is working. Think about

where Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden. It was a perfect garden.

It was not just a physical thing. But it was an environment that God had created where the Eternal could bring man and woman and begin communicating His principles, values and way of life to them. Therefore, when the Father works it's like the Garden of Eden! Those who are within *flourish*.

What kind of environment are we in the process of creating? On a personal level and also others! It also affects others, and can have influence on others. The kind of environment that we need to create can only come and be prompted by God's Holy Spirit.

That is because motivation that comes directly from the Spirit is tied directly to God the Father and Jesus Christ. To illustrate this point, let us look at two contrasting examples in the Old Testament, in the life of Moses. They're interesting concepts and contrasts to understand the impact of an environment and how people worked to create those environments.

We know from the time that Moses was a baby, God intervened in what happened in Moses' life. From the midwife and his parents choosing to ignore Pharaoh not to kill him, to his being put in a wicker-basket that was sealed with a tar-like substance. It was put in the reeds and the Pharaoh's daughter came and picked him out of the river, out of the reeds.

God was guiding the things that were going to happen, and that were happening to him early in his life. For the first 40 years of Moses' life he was raised in Pharaoh's household. He was raised in a specific environment. It is interesting to consider that environment that he was living under.

He was raised in a position where he had power, wealth and status! His life enmeshed in the Egyptian way of life. He was surrounded by Egyptian gods and educated in the Egyptian educational system being a member of Pharaoh's household. I think sometimes, considering the society that we live in it is a bit difficult to really understand what it means to be living in that kind of society.

Church and state were the same thing. But he also was raised in a position of privilege and power, so that at the age of 40 the perspective he had had to have been influenced by that, by the environment he was living under.

He had to have felt someone special and superior with that education and the training that he

received. Everyone around him looked up to him. That's how he was raised. That was the environment that Moses was living under.

What is interesting about Moses and his situation is that as God began to collaborate with him an intensely prepare him for his role he was called to fulfill. The relationship that God wanted with him, the Eternal God took him out of that environment he was in. God took him out for 40 solid years!

The environment that he was supported by as the Prince of Egypt was gone. He was moved to a completely different environment. The Eternal God needed somebody who was committed to Him and to releasing His people from bondage. That meant that Moses needed an environmental change from what he had been living under. He needed a different environment so that he could understand and finally have that connection.

So, in effect, the environment that he was in needed to be wiped out so that a new one could start to be developed. Of course, that did not occur overnight. This played out for over 40 years.

Exodus 3:1: "Now, Moses kept the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the west side of the desert. And he came to the mountain of God, to Horeb. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire! And the bush *was* not consumed" (vs 1-2).

Think about that! You were the Prince of Egypt and you have that power. You have glory and honor, *you are the guy, Pharaoh's grandson!* All of that was ripped away and now Moses became a shepherd. He went out with his sheep into the desert and walk around and that is what he did for 40 years.

Obviously there were other things that Moses was engaged in, but talk about an environment change from what he had so that he could build a strong and different relationship with God.

As God revealed himself, and as Moses engaged with God, he began to understand the spiritual purpose. As God began to work with Moses, he began to grow and develop a unique new environment for himself, his family and those around him.

With this there had to be a fundamental change. There was a real change in Moses' life, so let us look at two ways, fruits, examples of degree of change that he experienced.

## 1. humility

Some believe that there is some indication that Moses was more than just a prince in Egypt. In *Josephus* there are indications that Moses was a great general who led the Egyptian armies against the Ethiopians and defeated them.

Regardless, as a prince and powerful general, he had grandeur and power. He could tell people what to do. He had developed a perspective of himself.

Exodus 2:11: “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, he went out to his brethren and looked upon their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he did not see anyone, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand” (vs 11-12).

When Moses killed the Egyptian, it was premeditated, intentional. In fact, it was murder! He had come to the place in his life where he felt that he could be an arbiter, a decision maker of life and death. He willingly made that decision. Moses had a high evaluation of himself.

I cannot not imagine in this situation where Moses was—a prince, a great general—that humility was a function of who and what he was.

God wiped all that out! Took him out of Egypt and collaborated with him. It was not just Moses who had to change. Moses had to start engaging in actual actions that began to change the environment around him, as well. God taking him out by himself was not the answer. Moses had to engage in actions that began to change his environment. *They went together!*

As Moses engaged in those actions, he began to create a support system that helped this new man, the new creation, to grow. That is the analogy that we should be after. But as long as Moses was in Egypt, the environment and support system were not good. That had to be wiped out and had to be made anew. What was the result for Moses?

Numbers 12:1: “And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had taken, for he had taken a Cushite woman.”

Miriam and Aaron were not happy with that marriage and began to speak against Moses behind his back.

Verse 2: “And they said, ‘Has the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? Has He not also spoken by us?’ And the LORD heard *it*. (Now the

man Moses *was* very meek, more than all the men on the face of the earth.)” (vs 2-3). *A complete change!*

When Moses engaged in this process of change, he embraced it. His heart changed! His motivation changed! He changed in the actions that came out of him. *Totally changed!* It created a brand new environment that moved him as an individual from a place where he felt he could adjudicate life and death to becoming the humblest man that lived at that time.

- what a substantial change for Moses
- what a substantial change of environment

*It's an example of what we should be striving for!*

## 2. Moses' relationship with God

As we saw in Exo. 2, Moses obviously had an idea of his lineage. He understood that he was a Hebrew, not an Egyptian. But he also was a prince. If you think about the situation he was in, he was consistently confronted and immersed in a situation where Egyptian gods, Egyptian ritualistic worship practices were practiced and seen as being supreme. That is what he was confronted with every single day.

In our society, we try to differentiate between church and state. Again, it is difficult to understand that in the society that Moses lived in that church and state were the same thing. Pharaoh was viewed as a god, which meant that the government that Pharaoh oversaw, Moses being a prince and a part of that government, was from God as the Egyptians would see it.

If you think about his being a prince, I cannot imagine him being in a situation where he would have been allowed not to be part of those religious observances; especially if you were a conquering general. You would engage, participate and be around those services as they were going on, because of your place in Pharaoh's house. *The government and the religious system were the same thing!*

Leading up to Moses' fleeing, there is not a strong indication that Moses had much of a relationship with God. He understood that he was Hebrew and also understood that there was a God of the Hebrews. But think about it from his perspective, just looking at it from the outside. He was immersed in all these practices of these gods and he sees the military might and power and strength that is associated with Pharaoh and the religious worship that goes into all that.

Then you have a slave people and their God. It is fair to say that Moses understood that there was a God. I do not think that it is a stretch of the imagination to say that he did not understand Who God actually was. Therefore, when the Eternal decided to collaborate with Moses, Moses had to come out of the environment that he was in; that's the only way it would work.

We are going to plop you down here and set you down here in Midian. You are going to be a shepherd, Moses. We are going to tear this down. We are going to begin to collaborate with you. You are going to learn different actions, and begin to create a unique new environment.

Actions over time will create that environment that begins to align with My character and Who I AM.

That being God the Father and developing that character. *After this:*

- What was the result for Moses?
- What happened to Moses?

Verse 4: "And the LORD spoke suddenly to Moses and to Aaron and to Miriam, 'You three come out to the tabernacle of the congregation.' And the three came out. And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both came forward. And He said, 'Hear now My words. If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD will make Myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream. **Not so with My servant Moses. He is faithful in all My house. I will speak with him mouth to mouth, even clearly, and not in dark speeches.** And he shall behold the likeness of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?'" (vs 4-8).

Miriam and Aaron are out there talking about Moses, and saying:

Hey Moses, God has talked to us, you're not the only one, We did not like what you did. We need to take over a little bit here.

Think about the change. From one point, an individual who had no virtual perception to an individual whom God came and said:

When there is a prophet I speak to him in dreams and visions. But this individual I speak to face-to-face. This is My servant Moses. This is the relationship that I have with him.

*Pretty powerful statement!* An incredible statement from God, but it is also indicative of this change that Moses had undergone; from not really knowing God

immersed totally in a new environment that was antagonistic to this.

To see the contrast, let's look at a second example. Let us consider the nation of Israel. As you might expect, this example was not so successful. In this example you're going to see some struggles.

We know God's plan for Israel. As they languished in activity, God's plan was to free them from Egypt and bring them into a new land that He had watched over and cared for. It was God's intention for them to be an example, a model for all the rest of the people of the earth to be able to see and to engage with.

- they were to learn
- they were to keep His way of life
- they were to be set out there as a light on a hill

***for the other nations to crisscross and to come in and see the way that they lived!***

To see the environment that was created for the families and for individuals. The environment that the communities lived in, they were to be that light. They were to be God's light, and be an example for everyone!

Deut. 4—the Eternal emphasizes this point of what He was expecting from His people.

Deuteronomy 4:4: "And you who held fast to the LORD your God *are* alive, every one of you, this day. Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you should do so in the land where you go to possess it. And you shall keep and do *them*, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.' For what nation is so great whose God *is* so near to them, as the LORD our God *is*, whenever we call upon Him? And what great nation has statutes and judgments that *are* so righteous as all this Law, which I set before you today?" (vs 4-8).

So, when the people engaged and their actions reflected the nature of their God and the actions they exhibited on a day-to-day basis, it created an environment for other people to come and see. It should have affected a change. Not just for Israel, but for everybody who came through it.

To achieve this purpose, God took them out of Egypt, out of the environment that they had been steeped in for over 400 years. Especially in the last part of their slavery they had been really guided and directed and immersed in a powerful society that began to affect the way that they thought.

God had to move them out of there to a total change of environment. He put them in a 'promised land' and help them establish a separate way of life, so that a different environment could be developed. One that they could flourish in, and environment where God's standards, ethics, culture in social norms would be established for the people to live in.

Think about what God wanted the people to do. They were structure their lives so that it created an environment totally different from what they were in previously to a people connected back to God.

Deuteronomy 6:6: "And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart. **And you shall diligently teach them to your children,** and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. **And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand,** and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house and on your gates" (vs 6-9).

It was their responsibility. They had to do things; they had to act and extend themselves. If you really think about it:

- What kind of a world would have been created?
- What kind of environment would it be if they would engaged on what God had given them and asked them to do?

Consider just a couple of the statutes they were given:

Leviticus 19:9: And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field. And you shall not gather the gleaning of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard. And you shall not gather the *fallen grapes* of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and the stranger. *I am* the LORD your God" (vs 9-10).

*Clear instructions given to them!* Think about our modern society today.

- Where would hunger and social support be if the community actually took responsibility to care for this within?
- What kind of environment would have been created in Israel if they would have heeded and obeyed what God had told them?

Verse 18: "You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. *I am* the

LORD."

What about a society where people are not trying to commit violence and murder against each other? Read the last part of the book of Judges. They did not do that. You can go through the rest of Lev. 19 and look at the statutes and the judgments that God was giving His people so that they could create a new environment that reflected God's nature.

- What happened?
- Where did it end up?

*We see very clearly where it ended up!*

Ezekiel 22:6: "'Behold, the princes of Israel, every one has used his power to shed blood in you. In you they have despised *both* father and mother. In your midst they have dealt with the stranger by oppression. In you they oppressed the orphan and the widow. You have despised My Holy things, and have profaned My Sabbaths. In you are men of slander *who* shed blood; and in you they *that* eat on the mountains; in your midst they commit lewdness. In you they have uncovered their fathers' nakedness; in you they have humbled her who was unclean in her impurity. And a man has committed abominations with his neighbor's wife; and a man has lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another has humbled his sister, his father's daughter. In you they have taken bribes to shed blood. You have taken usury and excessive increase, and you gained by extortion of your neighbors, **and you have forgotten Me,**' says the Lord GOD" (vs 6-12).

WOW! The wrong environment that they had brought upon themselves! What was the result?

Verse 30: "'And I sought for a man among them who should build up a wall for the land, and stand in the breach before Me, so that I should not destroy it. But I did not find one. Therefore, **I have poured out My fury on them. I have burned them up with the fire of My wrath. I have recompensed their own way upon their heads,**' says the Lord GOD" (vs 30-31). *A terrible, terrible result!*

Brethren, as we sit here today, in today's society, seeing everything that's going on around us, we look forward to the Day of Pentecost, which is upon us. Coming out of Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread, it's a suitable time to ask ourselves, each one of us:

- What kind of an environment are we creating by the action that we take on a regular basis?
- Are we engaging in the process of change, as our Father has laid out for us to see in His Word?



- Have we really thought about the effects of the environment that has been around us?
- Have we thought about the environment that God has brought us the opportunity to live in?

***It requires change!*** With the change, just thinking about it does not work! ***There needs to be action!***

To begin to reflect God's nature, our heart has to change. The actions of our heart coming out reflects the nature that God wants us to be.

- Are we creating environments around us for ourselves, our families, our communities because of our actions that enhance and support our connection with God the Father and Jesus Christ?
- Is that what we're doing?

We must each ask ourselves how we are doing on that part. For us to really move forward in this change process, it must be done holistically. If we just learn things that have an intellectual ascent to the Truth, with no action, errors come out of it. We have knowledge, but nothing else.

If we just have actions that are not connected to the heart that is changing, we still have a conflict and our environment will reflect that conflict. But if we engage in the process of change, if we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us—that's so important—and let God's principles and actions flow from that, that's the kind of environment that we should be building and creating.

Individuals, families and the people of God will be one that nourishes, points to and connects many, many back to the Father.

That is the crux of my message today. Connecting back to God the Father and Jesus Christ, and developing the action creating that connection that we need to become true children of God. Developing the mind of Christ and taking that environment to build on and share with others seeing the same thing.

***That is what God is wanting and looking for as we approach another Pentecost!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) 2 Corinthians 5:16-17
- 2) 2 Corinthians 4:16
- 3) Ephesians 4:28
- 4) John 16:14-15
- 5) Galatians 2:20
- 6) Zechariah 4:6
- 7) Exodus 3:1-2

- 8) Exodus 2:11-12
- 9) Numbers 12:1-8
- 10) Deuteronomy 4:4-8
- 11) Deuteronomy 6:6-9
- 12) Leviticus 19:9-10, 18
- 13) Ezekiel 22:6-12, 30-31

NB:bo  
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